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ning through altruistic motives, and now it is a remunerative profession. Mental nursing will have to be taken up with the same enthusiasm and ideals. It has a great future.

MENTAL HYGIENE IN THE SCHOOL¹

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"There are three wicks to the lamp of a man's life: brain, blood and breath,
Press the brain a little, its light goes out, followed by both the others."

HOLMES.

When the truth of this statement is impressed equally on teachers, parent and pupil, then in time we may be able to abolish ungraded classes, truant home and asylums, and decrease the number of our jails.

"Press the brain a little, its light goes out." How rarely does the system, the teacher or parent ever consider the possibility, that in each individual case the wick is not equally absorbent, equally capable of consuming the oil of knowledge. An excess of fuel often snuffs out the flame, and adds to the number of our mentally defective.

Children develop mentally at different ages, as the result of nationality, heredity and environment, and consequently require more individual attention in their earlier classes. Inability to keep to the standard of the class, inattention, unruly disposition, truancy, etc., are evidences, not necessarily of feeble-mindedness, but frequently of bodily or mental ill-health, which can, with proper care and medical supervision, be overcome. Many are improperly housed and fed, given very little encouragement to grow physically, morally or mentally, and when the child shows mental inefficiency these conditions should be investigated and, where necessary, corrected.

Generally it is easier to follow the bad than the good, to do wrong rather than right, the normal child has to strive continually to make the better choice and the mentally weak require stronger incentive and greater inducement to reach the goal.

Ofttimes children are mentally sick because of physical defect, poor vision, enlarged tonsils and adenoids, imperfect nutrition, anaemia, nervous disorders, etc., all conditions that cause the child to be discontented and apparently dull and backward, yet conditions yielding to treatment. When these defects are found on inspection in school, the coöperation of the parent and family physician is not always given,

¹ This paper was awarded the first prize offered to nurses of the Division of Child Hygiene, New York, for the best essay on the subject.

with the result that the child's retardation is increased, until possibility of correction is past, and teacher and parent alike regard the child as hopeless. If we could make the parent realize that the child will not outgrow these conditions, that time will only add to them, that only by careful and capable medical treatment will the child grow to proper health and normal mentality, then a great deal might be accomplished. The great problem seems to be to make the parent and family physician regard the departments of health and education, not as officious taskmasters but as friends and co-workers for the ultimate welfare of the child and community.

The mental hygiene of the child should begin with its birth, not when it enters school. The early period of its existence should be so ordered, that its mind would develop as carefully as its body. Mothers should be taught that a baby requires quiet and hygienic environment. Parents should study and know their own deficiencies and when these characteristics appear in their child should, as early as possible, try firmly and kindly to correct them. Teach the child to do good and be good, not because it will be punished but because it will be healthier, wealthier and happier.

Teach the school child the benefits of mental and physical health, as well as to read and write and to draw; teach the benefits and comforts of cleanliness of mind and body in the home and school, the value of mental and bodily exercise—and always explain “why.” Most of our infringements of the laws of health and mental hygiene are because we do not understand “why” and most of us have to learn by experience.

We cannot possibly expect to accomplish much with this generation, we can only hope to properly educate the present parent and child, by teaching them that it is no disgrace, but a misfortune, to be sick or backward; and by showing that the fault lies in not doing all possible to help the weak and in not trying to raise the standard of the future, by a more rigid attention to the laws of inheritance, health and environment. A great deal may, and must be accomplished by the Division of Child Hygiene, whose work begins with the prenatal and follows the child through its infancy, its babyhood, its school life and starts it on the way as a wage-earner. But complete success depends on the parent, the school and the family physician, rarely, unfortunately, can the coöperation of all four be obtained, especially in the case of the mentally-weak child. With such coöperation the Division of Child Hygiene could attain its ultimate purpose, and demonstrate to the world in general, that from a comparatively small expenditure can result a return priceless to the nation.